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ABSTRACT

A Holocaust survivor recently implored social studies teachers to "remember our faces." This becomes an especially poignant plea when one considers the ages of the Holocaust survivors, rescuers, and liberators. This generation will soon be gone. Who will remain to tell their stories? As the 50th anniversary remembrance of World War II continues, the significance of the European Holocaust and its implications for teaching social studies at the middle and high school must be considered. Too often the Holocaust is forgotten in the recitation of dates and battles, commanders and campaigns. The annihilation of more than six million Jews cannot be described in the one or two paragraphs devoted to the Holocaust in the average social studies text. Though Auschwitz, Dachau, Bergen-Belsen, and other Nazi death camps are synonymous with horror, what of the identities of the victims of those camps? How do educators teach about those individuals who died in the camps, of those survivors who left the camps forever changed, or of those rescuers who risked their lives to help others? The goals of this ERIC Digest are to: (1) present a rationale for Holocaust education; (2) discuss curriculum placement for inclusion of the topic; (3) list organizations and resources available to help educators in teaching about the Holocaust; and (4) provide a bibliography of relevant materials in the ERIC database. (Author/DB)

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"REMEMBER OUR FACES"—TEACHING ABOUT THE HOLOCAUST

by Evelyn R. Holt

A Holocaust survivor recently implored social studies teachers to "remember our faces." This becomes an especially poignant plea when one considers the ages of the Holocaust survivors, rescuers, and liberators. This generation will soon be gone. Who remains to tell their stories? As the 50th anniversary remembrance of World War II continues, the significance of the European Holocaust and its implications for teaching social studies at the middle school and high school must be considered. Too often the Holocaust is forgotten in the recitation of dates and battles, commanders and campaigns. The annihilation of more than six million Jews cannot be described in the one or two paragraphs devoted to the Holocaust in the average social studies text. Though Auschwitz, Dachau, Bergen-Belsen, and other Nazi death camps are synonymous with horror, what of the identities of the victims of those camps? How do we teach about those individuals who died in the camps, of those survivors who left the camps forever changed, or of those rescuers who risked their lives to help others?

The intents of this ERIC Digest are to (1) present a rationale for Holocaust education; (2) discuss curriculum placement for inclusion of the topic; (3) list organizations and resources available to help teachers in teaching about the Holocaust; and (4) provide a bibliography of relevant materials in the ERIC database.

Why Teach about the Holocaust. Educators in schools, museums, and archives must accept the responsibility to teach these stories of the Holocaust to future generations. The Holocaust, a significant event in 20th-century world history, has had a profound effect on the state of the world today. For example, to understand complex issues about the conflicts in the Middle East, we must trace certain events from the Holocaust. We must include Holocaust education in the curriculum to understand important contemporary events.

The best way to teach about the Holocaust is by including the stories. This approach would also coincide with the Bradley Commission on History in Schools report (1988, 25) which encourages the use of narrative and case studies as a way to "test and illustrate concepts drawn from other disciplines, which in their turn give added meaning to the historical record."

What educators must do is to tell these stories realistically, to "remember the faces" of those people who were affected and are still affected today. The stories of the Holocaust are accounts of courage, hope, selflessness, and determination, combined with evil, degradation, selfishness, and pathos. Such a study in contrasts presents opportunities for students to develop empathy and skills in research and evaluation.

Study of the Holocaust often leads to prejudice reduction as students learn how intolerance can result in unjust discrimination and even destruction. Research into these complex events develops a sense of empowerment as there is an intellectual sophistication of dealing with these "tough" issues. Gabelko (1988, 52) sees this "cognitive sophistication" leading to students' increased self-esteem, decreased frustration in the schooling experience, and more pro-active behavior. Similar conclusions have been drawn by others. If we lead students through the exploration of this event of recent history, perhaps we can reduce the likelihood of a future Holocaust.

Our overriding educational goal must be to enhance students' knowledge and understanding of our world as a prerequisite for judgments and actions to improve it. We must teach accurately about the ugly realities of the Holocaust and its far-reaching consequences, so that students develop commitments, based on knowledge and reason, to the worth and dignity of all persons.

Curriculum Placement and Teaching Strategies. How do we tell the stories of the Holocaust? Where can teaching about the Holocaust occur in the curriculum? Without dwelling only on the depression of death and destruction of the Holocaust, the social studies teacher must incorporate many different strategies in the courses, depending upon the subject being taught. A brief discussion of placement and strategies follows.

Several oral history projects have captured the eloquent testimonies of survivors, rescuers, and liberators. These oral histories are intriguing for students as a way to make history "real," a way to personalize history so that the events are not just facts and statistics. Oral histories can also be used in an interdisciplinary approach with literature. Much Holocaust literature exists, appropriate for all reading levels.

In geography, students can create maps of Europe and explore the reasons for the locations of the concentration camps. Why did the camps tend to be located in Eastern Europe, many in Poland? What were significant environmental factors which affected the camps? Students should explore physical factors, landforms, etc., which were important in camp location.

In history (world and US) students could explore these questions: How much did the world really know about what was happening in the concentration camps? What were the reactions of the world powers when the exterminations were discovered? How much resistance actually occurred? Too often the Jews have been portrayed as being meekly led to slaughter, with the world standing idly by. Students should be exposed to the story of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising in 1943, when the complete enclosed ghetto area was leveled by the Nazis after 28 days of fierce resistance by the ghetto fighters and many deaths on both sides. The courageous acts of the Danes should be cited, when they rescued the great majority of Danish Jews with a flotilla to Sweden after the Nazis

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ordered deportation. The story of Danish King Christian, who wore the Jewish star when the Nazis ordered the emblem to be worn as a sign of Jewry, is an especially engaging example of morality and bravery. Such stories are often overlooked in the rush to "cover the course," but these are the cases of courage which interest the students and provide models of moral behavior for their analysis and evaluation. In addition, the modern state of Israel can be studied for its historical roots in the ashes of the Jewish Holocaust in Europe as well as its modern influence in world affairs. Sociology and psychology also provide opportunities to study the Holocaust. Primary documents exist which specifically delineate Hitler's plans for the Jews and other Europeans he excluded from his "Master Race." Teachers can use studies of the influence of group behavior to explain the rise of Nazism. Yet this is also an excellent chance to incorporate the personalities of the rescuer, the resistance fighter, the victims, and those who collaborated. An under-studied topic is the role of the rescuers and the impact they had upon this era's events. Much material is available in the behavioral science areas to study about the Holocaust.

The Holocaust can be effectively used in the study of economics. One needs to look at the costs of the Holocaust, not only in human lives. Jewish properties were confiscated for the Third Reich, as well as all of their personal belongings upon deportation to the camps. Another economic consideration is the cost of camp construction and maintenance. Documents exist which deal with the monetary considerations of the persecutions, the costs of transportation to the camps, and even the very locations of the camps themselves on the railhead. What could have happened if the Allies had bombed the railroads leading into the camps?

Political science and civics students have many topics for consideration with their study of the Holocaust. Such opportunities could include the rights of the individual versus the state, the issue of unjust laws and the duties of citizens to obey laws, civil liberties and the rule of law, as well as many other related questions that these topics could generate. Citizenship education takes on a whole new perspective when one views the creation of the Nazi state and the Third Reich. Couple those questions of citizenship education with the sequential denial of rights to the Jews, which eventually led to the planned annihilation of the whole race by the state, and the teacher has a perplexing but challenging course of study.

Organizations and Resources for Teaching of Holocaust Topics. At the community level, consult area Jewish societies. Often these groups provide resource speakers or materials for classroom use. Survivors of the concentration camps will be available to speak to classes in some instances. Veterans' organizations will often provide speakers who were liberators of the concentration camps. State offices of Jewish societies may also be contacted by consulting the telephone directory, directory assistance, or the local library reference section.

At the national level, the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith (ADL), 823 United Nations Plaza, New York, NY 10017, (212) 490-2525, works for civil rights and fair treatment for all citizens. The ADL maintains a speakers' bureau and 30 regional offices, and it publishes materials for teachers and students on the Holocaust.

The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2000 L Street, NW, Suite 588, Washington, DC 20036-4907, (202) 653-9220, commissioned by Congress in 1980, offers a variety of educational programs on the subject and will expand those offerings with the opening of the Holocaust Memorial Museum in 1993. Regular programs include workshops and presentations, a poster series, an essay contest, and curriculum projects.

The Anne Frank Institute of Philadelphia, Lafayette Building 608, P.O. Box 40119, Philadelphia PA 19103, (215) 238-5379, is devoted to the study of genocide and the Holocaust, maintains a speakers' bureau, and conducts programs for teachers and other community groups.

The American Gathering of Jewish Holocaust Survivors, 122 W. 30th St., Suite 205, New York, NY 10001, (212) 239-4230, seeks to commemorate the Holocaust and combat anti-Semitism through programs, articles, assemblies, teacher education, and a speakers' bureau.

On the international level, the Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Authority, located at Yad Vashem in Jerusalem, Israel, is dedicated to researching the stories of the Holocaust and commemorating its victims.

The International Alert Against Genocide, 1015 Gayley Avenue, Box 259, Los Angeles, CA 90024, seeks to increase awareness and prevention through research, teaching, and focusing on violations of human rights. Also, the United Nations maintains an active interest in human rights in the world.

Several excellent books on the topic of the Holocaust are available for teachers and their most able students. One such source is THE HOLOCAUST: THE FATE OF EUROPEAN JEWRY by Leni Yahil. Reviewers have hailed this book as the finest and most authoritative study of the Holocaust ever published. This book, widely available in bookstores and libraries, was published in 1990 by the Oxford University Press.

References and ERIC Resources

The following list of resources includes references used to prepare this Digest. The items followed by an ED number are in the ERIC system. They are available in microfiche and paper copies from the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS). For information about prices, contact EDRS, 7420 Fullerton Road, Suite 110, Springfield, Virginia 22153-2852; telephone numbers are (703) 440-1400 and (800) 443-3742. Entries followed by an EJ number are annotated monthly in CURRENT INDEX TO JOURNALS IN EDUCATION (CIJE), which is available in most larger public and university libraries. EJ documents are not available through EDRS. However, they can be located in the journal section of many libraries by using the bibliographic information provided below, or ordered through Interlibrary Loan.

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